

United States Senate Committee on
**AGRICULTURE
NUTRITION
& FORESTRY**

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman

Growing the Rural Economy

The Agricultural Act of 2014

The 2014 Farm bill provides significant resources for rural development and renewable energy initiatives. These investments provide opportunities, income and jobs in our nation's rural communities.

Rural communities reflect the vibrant spirit of America and have always been a symbol of our national values. Today, rural communities face serious economic threats and an erosion of a way of life that stretches back many generations. The 2014 Farm Bill helps rebuild those communities by investing in the future to ensure rural communities thrive in the 21st century economy.

Supports the Growing Bio-Based Economy

The bill provides new opportunities for renewable chemicals and biobased products. Biobased products will now be eligible to receive loans through the Biorefinery Assistance Program. The Biobased Markets program is extended with modifications to allow greater access for forest products, and integrity measures are strengthened for USDA's Biopreferred labeling program.

Rural Energy for America

The popular Rural Energy for America (REAP) program has helped nearly 4,000 farmers, ranchers and rural business owners lower their energy bills by installing renewable and energy efficient systems. The bill provides robust funding for REAP and authorizes a streamlined application process that will help for farmers and rural businesses move forward more quickly on small projects.

Promotes Advanced Bioenergy Production

The bill funds the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) and the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels, which provide support to dedicated energy crops and advanced energy production. These programs help spur renewable energy development in addition to assisting farmers in making the transition to non-food based renewable energy sources.

Rural Business Development

The bill reauthorizes critical Rural Business programs such as the Business and Industry Loan Program that provide needed capital to small businesses in our rural communities. The bill also funds the Value-Added Agricultural Market Development Program, which is designed to encourage independent producers of agricultural commodities to process their raw products into marketable goods, thereby increasing farm income.

Improves Rural Infrastructure

Enhancing public infrastructure remains a priority if our rural communities are to meet their full potential. The bill provides funding to meet the growing demand for improvements to our rural water systems. The bill also supports the expansion of access to broadband internet service. The bill specifically targets these funds to rural communities without broadband service.

Strategic Economic and Community Development

The bill reserves funding and prioritizes applications submitted for funds through Rural Development programs that support regional approaches to community and economic development. When neighboring communities work together to identify their unique characteristics and strengths, they can invest in infrastructure improvements and economic development programs that serve the entire region and create job opportunities that are more likely to stay in the region.